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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 171831

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO BANGKOK, GENEVA,
HONG KONG FROM VIENTIANE JULY 17 REPEATED FOR YOU:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 4873

DEPT REPEAT OTHER ADDRESSEES OF REFTEL AS DESIRED

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, VS

SUBJ: AMERICAN PRISONERS IN SOUTH VIET-NAM; UNHCR ACTIVITIES

REF: STATE 167226

1. REFTEL ARRIVED COINCIDENTALLY WITH CALL BY ALEXANDRE
CASELLA OF UNHCR ON POLITICAL COUNSELOR. OVER WEEKEND,
DARRYL HAN OF UNHCR HAS REQUESTED MEETING AS WELL WHICH
RESULTED IN LITTLE REPORTABLE INFORMATION.

2. AT MOMENT, UNHCR FLIGHTS TO SAIGON ARE IN SUSPENSE.
THERE HAS BEEN NONE SINCE JULY 10, FOR REASONS THAT UNHCR
REPS BELIEVE ARE TECHNICAL OR OTHERWISE NON-POLITICAL.
WEATHER IS BAD, OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY OF CONTROL TOWER AT
TAN SON NHUT (SAIGON) IS UNCERTAIN, AND PRG MAY BE STAGING
MILITARY FLIGHTS WHICH IT DOES NOT WANT OUTSIDERS TO
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WITNESS. THERE MAY BE POLITICAL FACTORS AS WELL, BUT IF

SO UNHCR REPS ARE NOT CERTAIN WHAT THEY ARE.

3. QUESTION OF UNHCR'S DELIVERING MAIL AND PACKAGES FOR SCARBOROUGH AND OTHERS IS THEREFORE ACADEMIC AT THE MOMENT, AND CASELLA'S REACTION WAS THAT FURTHER EFFORT TO GAIN CONFIDENCE OF PRG OFFICIALS IN SAIGON WOULD BE NECESSARY (ONCE FLIGHTS HAVE RESUMED) BEFORE UNHCR COULD RAISE THE QUESTION. UNHCR WAS TOLD SPECIFICALLY SOME TIME AGO THAT IT COULD NOT RPT NOT CARRY MAIL FOR ICRC.

4. WE WILL OF COURSE BE GLAD TO RECEIVE ANY MAIL AND PACKAGES FAMILIES WISH TO SEND BUT CANNOT ESTIMATE WHEN UNHCR MIGHT BE WILLING TO ATTEMPT DELIVERY. RECOMMEND ALL SUCH ITEMS BE ADDRESSED SIMPLY TO POLITICAL SECTION, AMERICAN EMBASSY, BOX V, APO SAN FRANCISCO 96346, AND NOT RPT NOT TO CHARGE OR ANY OTHER OFFICER BY NAME. NONE OF ITEMS SCARBOROUGH ASKED FOR KNOWN TO BE AVAILABLE HERE (REFTEL, PARA 6) BUT BELIEVE THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUBSTITUTE PACKAGE; FAMILY'S OWN WILL PROBABLY REACH HERE BEFORE UNHCR FEELS ABLE TO TRY DELIVERY.

5. UNHCR HAS NOW ARRANGED TO USE ROYAL AIR LAO'S CARAVELLE FOR SAIGON FLIGHTS INSTEAD OF DC-4. THIS WILL CUT TRAVEL TIME TO ROUGHLY TWO HOURS EACH WAY BY SAME INDIRECT ROUTE USED PREVIOUSLY (VIENTIANE 4685). FOR ATMOSPHERIC OR OTHER REASONS, THERE IS NO LONGER RADIO COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN TOWERS AT WATTAY (VIENTIANE) AND TAN SON NHUT, AND COMMO BETWEEN HANOI AND SAIGON IS SLOW AND UNRELIABLE. FOR THIS REASON OFFICIALS IN HANOI ADVISED RIZVI OF UNHCR THIS WEEK THAT UNHCR FLIGHTS SHOULD GO AHEAD WITHOUT PRIOR SAIGON CLEARANCE AND RADIO TAN SON NHUT WHEN ABOUT 45 MINUTES OUT FOR PERMISSION TO LAND. CASELLA WILL TRY THIS, POSSIBLY AS EARLY AS JULY 18, ALTHOUGH UNHCR GOT SPECIFIC TURN-DOWN FOR FLIGHT JULY 17 THROUGH DRV EMBASSY VIENTIANEWO

6. INCIDENTALLY, AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST JOURNALIST WILFRED BURCHETT IS NOW IN VIENTIANE AND HOPES TO GO TO SAIGON AS SOON AS UNHCR RESUMES FLIGHTS.

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7. ON SUBJECT OF REPATRIATION OF VIETNAMESE FROM GUAM AND ELSEWHERE, CASELLA SAID RIZVI RETURNED FROM HANOI JULY 16 WITH FOLLOWING: DRV AUTHORITIES AND/OR PRG REPRESENTATIVES IN HANOI PROFESS TO BELIEVE THAT POTENTIAL REPATRIATES ARE BEING INCITED TO STAGE HUNGER STRIKES AND OTHER MANIFESTATIONS BY AMERICANS WHO USED TO WORK FOR CORDS AND ARE NOW WORKING IN REFUGEE PROGRAM ON GUAM. THEY ALLEGEDLY TOLD TIZVI THAT ANY VIETNAMESE WHO REALLY WANTED TO

COME HOME WOULD KNOW THAT SUCH TACTICS ARE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND WOULD SHUN THEM. THE WHOLE HUNGER-STRIKE EXERCISE IS SEEN IN HANOI AS SIMPLY ONE MORE NEFARIOUS U.S. PLOT AMONG OTHERS, WHICH ARE ALLEGED TO INCLUDE ARMING OF MEO REFUGEES IN THAILAND FOR MILITARY ACTION AGAINST LAOS. ACCORDING TO CASELLA, RIZVI CONCLUDED THAT THE GREATER THE PRESSURE, THE SLOWER THE PROCESS OF REPATRIATION WILL BECOME.

8. IT IS ALREADY SLOW ENOUGH. UNHCR HAS NOW DELIVERED SOME 500 INDIVIDUALS DOSSIRS TO SAIGON BUT PRG HAS YET TO ACT FAVORABLY ON ANY OF THEM. PRG IS EVIDENTLY RUNNING SECURITY CHECKS AND ALSO INTERVIEWING RELATIVES OF WOULD-BE REPATRIATES AT LEAST IN SAIGON AREA. HAN AS OF JULY 13 THOUGHT APPROVAL MIGHT COME THIS WEEK FOR TWO SAILORS OR MERCHANT SEAMEN NOW IN VIENTIANE, BUT HE WAS NOT SURE WHETHER THESE WERE UNHCR CASES OR INDEPENDENT ONES BEING HANDLED BY DRV EMBASSY VIENTIANE. THE TWO FORMER GVN DIPLOMATS WHO WERE ALLOWED TO RETURN A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO WERE CLEARLY SPECIAL CASES BECAUSE OF THEIR PRESTIGE AND WERE TREATED AS SUCH. DRV HAS COPIES OF ALL DOSSIERS, BUT IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT PROCESSING IS DONE IN HANOI.

9. POL COUNSELOR NOTED OBVIOUS INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN PRG'S RADIO CALLS FOR RETURN OF REFUGEES AND ITS TORTUOUS PROCESSING OF CASES; HE SUGGESTED UNHCR URGE PRG TO TONE DOWN THE ONE OR SPEED UP THE OTHER, OR PREFERABLY BOTH. CASELLA SHRUGGED AT THIS, STATING THAT HE BELIEVES PRG IS INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING BILATERAL DEALINGS WITH USG AND SEES UNHCR MERELY AS CONDUIT. (COMMENT: CASELLA HAS NOT BEEN TO SAIGON EXCEPT PERHAPS AS A FLIGHT-CONVEYER ONCE OR TWICE, AND WE ARE NOT CERTAIN AS TO VALIDITY OF HIS PERCEPTIONS.)

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10. POL COUNSELOR ALSO PASSED TO CASELLA CONTENTS OF PARA 5, REFTTEL, REGARDING TUG SAIGON 240 AND LICENSES. CASELLA DID NOT APPEAR OVERLY INTERESTED IN TUG, AND COULD NOT CONFIRM ITS RETURN TO SAIGON, HAVING SEEN NO REPLY FROM

ANYONE TO STATE 165315. HOWEVER, HAN HAD INDICATED JULY 13 THAT TUG QUESTION WAS ONE OF SOME IMPORTANCE.

11. UNHCR WHEREABOUTS: HAN WENT TO HANOI JULY 14 OR 15 FOR A STAY OF A WEEK OR MORE. RIZVI WENT TO HANOI JULY 15 AND RETURNED DAY LATER; HE WILL NEXT VISIT SINGAPORE AND RENDEZVOUS WITH HAN IN BANGKOK ABOUT JULY 23. JAEGER HAS LEFT VIENTIANE FOR HONG KONG, WHERE HE INTENDS TO PURSUE CASELLA'S IDEA ABOUT USE OF

HONG KONG AS A MORE CONVENIENT TRANSIT POINT (VIENTIANE 4685). VON GANTEN IS IN VIENTIANE AND PREPARED TO BE "CONVEYER" OF FLIGHTS TO SAIGON. CASELLA WILL REMAIN HERE FOR PERHAPS ANOTHER TEN DAYS AND CONVEY SOME FLIGHTS HIMSELF BUT SAYS HE PLANS TO RETURN TO GENEVA ABOUT END OF NEXT WEEK IF, AS HE ASSUMES, HE CANNOT OPEN SAIGON OFFICE BY THEN. HE THINKS IT WILL BE AT LEAST TWO MONTHS BEFORE MAJOR "SOCIALIST" EMBASSY IS ESTABLISHED THERE A UNOFFICIAL BUT REAL PRECONDITION FOR OPENING OF UNHCR OFFICE.

12. THE JAEGER/RIZVI TRIP TO SOUTHEAST ASIA IS IN PART AN INSPECTION. ONE PURPOSE WAS TO SEE WHETHER HAN AND CASELLA FUNCTION WELL AS A TEAM. ANOTHER (WE GATHER) WAS TO CONFIRM GENEVA DECISION THAT VIENTIANE OFFICE HEADED BY JACQUES CUENOD WILL NO LONGER HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ALL OF INDOCHINA; CUENOD REPORTEDLY WELCOMES THIS BECAUSE HE HAS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO DO ON UNHCR'S LAOS PROGRAM. YET A THIRD PURPOSE WAS TO REVIEW WORK OF UNHCR REP KADRY IN BANGKOK; WE GOT IMPRESSION KADRY MIGHT BE REPLACED, A DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD HEARTEN OTHER UNHCR PERSONNEL AND ALL OF US CONCERNED WITH REFUGEES IN THAILAND (BANGKOK 13876, NOTAL). NEEDLESS TO SAY, HAN AND CASELLA SHOULD BE PROTECTED AS SOURCES OF THIS IN-HOUSE GOSSIP. CHAPMAN UNQUOTE KISSINGER
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